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Neo-Pagan Ritual

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#1619 05 Aug 85 22:48:33 (RECV'D)
From: Curly Howard To: Da Sysop
See also msg # 17
Subject: NEO-PAGANISM

All right, I don't want to sound dumb, but I have no idea what these rituals entail. What goes on during these, and what is their purpose ? Curly Howard

#1719 06 Aug 85 11:59:57 (RECV'D)
From: Brad Hicks REPLY To: Curly Howard
Reply to msg # 16 See also msg # 18
Subject: NEOPAGAN RITUAL

Boy, you don't ask the easy ones. Dr. Regardie takes 12 volumes to answer this one; Aleister Crowley, 13 or so; Isaac Bonewits, two (and that's only introductory).

I'll try to summarize, but if you're really interested, track down Starhawk's THE SPIRAL DANCE for further details. Most scholars divide ritual into two classes: 1) theurgic, and 2) thaumaturgic. In fancy words, this means that either you are praying to make your self "a better person" or "closer to God/ess" or "to be saved from your sins", or you are praying for the God/ess to intervene in the world around you - prayers for peace, for money, for health, etc.

Neopagan ritual partakes of both aspects, to some extent. In a typical ritual, various techniques (as old as humanity) are used to "raise the power," then the power is focused via magickal symbols to contact the God(s) and/or Goddess(es) who are being called upon. He/She/They take that magickal energy, augment it, and return it to the circle. The High Priest/ess then focuses that energy on the target - the object or person to be affected, if any - then any energies that remain (or the total energy, if there is no magickal target) are returned to the Gods, via a processes called "grounding."

To paraphrase Uncle Isaac's wonderful book on the subject, you have the wind-up, the pitch, and the follow-through.

The windup uses any ritual techniques that are appropriate to a) the setting, b) the purpose of the ritual, c) the deities being contacted, and d) the skills of the participants. The universals are chanting, dance, and "ritual theater." There are, of course, others.

The "pitch" uses beautiful, poetic imagery in guided meditations and ritual movement. Occasionally (if possible), this uses music and dance. Once the gods are contacted and the energy flows, it is concentrated in an object - usually cakes and wine, but occasionally by other means - and distributed, symbolically to all the participants. Having partaken of the energy thus raised, the guided meditations direct the people in focusing their energy on the purpose at hand.

Finally, the High Priest or Priestess goes through a "follow-through", which involves dissolving the "group mind", reassuring people that what we have worked is done and was effective, and then "grounding" any loose energies, so that when the group leaves the ritual circle, they are back in their normal minds.

As I write, it occurs to me that the real answer to your question lies in that last sentence - "back in their normal minds." Neopagan ritual is a collection of tools and techniques for altering your consciousness, temporarily, to a place where the Gods and Goddesses are real and near, where we as their children and lovers and friends can worship them, and where the magick we work can come true. Having convinced ourselves of this, we act on it, then return to our daily lives refreshed.

(Gods, what a bunch of gibberish! You would have been better off reading the books!)

Anyway, I tried. Anyone else (esp. Black Dragon if he shows up again, as he's worked at least as much ritual as I) please feel free to add or comment. Was this the kind of answer you wanted, Curly?

- Reverend Talespinner, O.S.C.
Clan Destiny Chapel of Eris & Dionysus
(aka, Brad Hicks)

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